



## Keynote Speaker Andy Mosmans addresses the importance of “Branding” to Aruba Meets Europe delegates.

The final day of the Aruba Meets Europe Conference was an enlightening experience for the seventy-one European delegates and the Aruba Tourism Authority staff as well. The preceding few days were spent in walking tours and ATV rallies, giving the delegates an entertaining look at the island, but on Thursday the conference settled into the Radisson Aruba Resort and Casino to get down to the business.

The day began with the Keynote Presentation by Chief Marketing Officer of the ARA Group of Rotterdam, Andy Mosmans. ARA Group is a division of TBWA/Worldwide and Aruba’s advertising agency in Holland. Mr. Mosmans is the author of a number of books on his chosen subject including “Brand Management”; “Mosmans About Marketing, Brands and Management:” and most recently “Business Success. How Corporations create their own Future,” for which he interviewed thirty-seven CEOs of the most admired corporations in the Netherlands. He is a columnist for The Dutch Financial Newspaper “Het Financieele Dagblad” and his articles have appeared in many international marketing and management publications. He is also a special tutor in the Academy of Management at the University of Groningen in a Postdoctoral course on Brand Management.

Aside from being eminently qualified on the subject, Mr. Mosmans proved to be a dynamic speaker with a stimulating presentation. He admits that “branding” is an element of advertising that has existed since Roman times when people first started to put names on the things they made, an artist’s signature on a painting for example or the fame of a “Stradivarius” violin, all employ, perhaps not consciously, the concept of “branding.” In the last ten years, actually educating marketers in the art of branding has become recognized as a crucial aspect in the success of a product. The University of Groningen, where Mr. Mossman teaches his post-doc course is one of the first institutions to initiate courses devoted to the subject, starting about ten years ago.

He gave a prime example of how branding increases perceived value in a product by showing the difference in a no-name sweatshirt that sells for \$10 and the same sweatshirt with a Nike logo the sells for \$52.95! “Great brands (such as Coca-Cola) are more than the sum of their parts; Coke is more than water, syrup, and bubbles. As a matter of fact, nobody really cares about what Coke is made of any more. .... When the memory is gone, the emotion remains.” This is an example of the concept of branding – the capacity to foster the sales of a product/service by creating an emotional link with the audience. “As such, a great brand balances the delivery of functional benefits with an emotional one.”

Such a concept is integral in the promotion of a vacation destination, for what could be a more emotional experience than enjoyment? Mr. Mosmans emphasizes that modern branding practices apply to elements beyond the promotion of a product. Creating a successful product and promoting brand loyalty entails an integration of many elements. In a vacation destination, it would also encompass the people, the amenities and in general, the consistent delivery of a quality product. In private conversation, Mr. Mosmans stated “Branding has gone beyond only the advertising aspect but includes how you do business in general, in your name, how one plays the game. It is the overall way one does business..... Aruba so far compared to other islands in the Caribbean has been more consistent and professional in their marketing practices. This may have to do with the fact that Aruba has the strongest American influence, and Americans are practically the one’s that have invented branding.”

He finished his fascinating presentation with the simple words of Jack Trout, a famous marketer, “Differentiate or die!” or as Mr. Mossmans prefers to put it “Brand and be happy!”

Following his lecture the audience was divided into six groups for workshops and a practical exercise in applying the concepts of branding, including comparing and analyzing Aruba to other islands and the preparation of a SWOT table (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) for Aruba. The results of each group proved amusing, revealing, and sometimes quite surprising as to how Aruba is perceived in a number of European countries.

The day continued with a brief presentation by many of the AHATA activity associates to familiarize the delegates with what is available on the island. Minister of Tourism Edison Briesen joined the group for an animated lunch in the Sunset Grill of the Radisson Resort, where they could enjoy the beautiful view and discuss the morning’s revelations. Afterwards, the afternoon was spent in detailed interviews with the sales managers of the island’s many resorts.

This year, Aruba received tour operators and travel media from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden; Switzerland, Austria; and Germany; Ireland and the United Kingdom; Belgium and Holland; Poland, a

good size delegation from Russia. It has been a very instructive few days on both sides, giving the European tour operators a chance to get to know Aruba as a destination so they can promote it to their clients, and allowing the ATA staff to learn how to better market to the preferences of the various countries. Both sides agree that it has been a very educational and productive experience.